



Pen City Current

HAPPY NEW YEAR! Wednesday, Jan. 4, 2017 | 6 pages | Volume 1 • Issue 13

Taylor to take session in stride

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

The Iowa legislature is firmly in the hands of the Republican party after November's general election, which puts both Lee County elected officials at the state level in the minority.



TAYLOR State Sen. Rich Taylor-Mt. Pleasant and State Rep. Jerry Kearns-Keokuk

both find themselves in a general assembly that has both the House and Senate and the governor's office in Republican Control, one of 25 states in the country with that current status.

While Kearns was unable to be reached for comment, Taylor said he's taking the upcoming session in stride and doing the work of the people.

"At first, when control of the senate changed hands I was pretty darned worried about it, but I still am going to be optimistic and treat it like I have every other session."

The 87th session of the Iowa General Assembly kicks off on Jan. 9, and Taylor said he's going to work for education and a boost in the state's minimum wage. In the last session Taylor serviced on the Agriculture, Economic Growth, Human Resources and Judiciary standing committees. He also chaired the Local Government committee and served on the Justice System Appropriations Subcommittee. This year Taylor said he will be the ranking member of the Judiciary committee.

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Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

More recognition

Todd Schneider, pictured with a group of solar panels on top of his School House Apartments was informed this week that he and Steffensmeier Welding and Mfg. of Pilot Grove have been named recipients of two 1000 Friends of Iowa development awards.

Steffensmeier, Schneider win awards

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - Two Fort Madison business owners are being recognized by an Iowa group for business projects they completed in 2016.

Todd Schneider, owner of School House Apartments and Jenny Steffensmeier of Steffensmeier Welding and Manufacturing in Pilot Grove were notified last week that they had been tapped by 1000 Friends of Iowa for the group's "Best Development Projects of 2016" The two will be received at a reception with state officials on Jan. 19 in Des Moines as part of the group's honorees.

Both projects are anchored by solar technology and using renewable resources to enhance business and reduce the reliance on more traditional forms of energy.

According to a release from the 1000 Friends group, five independent jurors from across the state selected projects that implement the efficient use of resources to

develop sustainable communities that provide a high quality of life.

Steffensmeier's company installed a solar panel field behind the company's facility just north of Pilot Grove. The field has 24 rows with more than 1,400 panels at a cost of more than \$1 million. The project was one of the largest in the state at the time and attracted a visit from U.S. Agriculture Secretary and Iowa governor Tom Vilsack in the fall. The project won the group's Best Development Award for Renewable Energy.

Schneider's award was for the overall Best Renovated Residential project.

"Sheri (Yasenchok-General Manager) worked her tail off to get that in. When we got the call, Sheri called up and said "Jenny, there's a lady on the phone from 1000 Friends..and we won. It's just so cool," Steffens-

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Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Missing boaters

Lee County law enforcement and rescue personnel searched for most of the afternoon Tuesday looking for two boaters who reportedly went into the Mississippi River. Search efforts will continue Wednesday morning as darkness stalled efforts Tuesday night.

Council looks at meeting times

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - The Fort Madison City Council, in an abbreviated meeting on Tuesday, discussed the possibility of moving the time of the meetings in 2017.

The Council voted 7-0 to continue to look into the option of moving the meetings from 7 p.m. on the first and third Tuesday of each month, to 5:30 p.m.

Several council members thought the action was to actually move the meeting time, but some, including Councilman

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From the Front

Taylor says he'll ask for 6% growth in education budget

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In the last session, Kearns served on the Ways and Means, Agriculture and Labor standing committees and was ranking member of the Veteran's Affairs committee. He also served on the Justice Systems Appropriations Subcommittee with Taylor.

Taylor said his push in education will focus on local school districts and preschool programs.

"My focus is mainly for K-12 education and earlier preschool than we have now. I can't change my agenda just because we changed control of power. I think the issues I have had for the past four years are still important."

Taylor said he plans on pushing for 6% allowable growth, a lofty number considering Gayla Young, a board member of the Fort Madison School District said at the last school board meeting that 1% figure is being kicked around just prior to the start of the session. But he also said he's not naive about that number.

"I'm going to ask for a bill for 6% allowable growth. Our schools need it. We've been shortchanging them ever since I've been here and even years before that," Taylor said.

"I don't expect that to go anywhere and I don't be-

lieve we'll get there. The republican agenda will be for a voucher system which I totally disagree with. People can come to Des Moines and demand that their public schools are well funded so that all kids get a good education not just the select few."

Taylor said he also thinks minimum wage will be a major issue again this session. Taylor is in favor of a \$10.10 minimum wage for Iowa.

"You know the Republicans have always been resistant of us Democrats trying to push minimum wage to another level," he said. "I intend to sponsor or co-sponsor a bill to raise the minimum wage to at

least 10.10 per hour. I don't see them taking that up either, but they could fool me. But if we don't bring it up, we know they won't do anything with it."

Taylor said his role on the rules committee will be very important this session as departments within the state try to set Republican agendas.

"They come up with rules and we approve or deny those rules. I get a feeling they will try to push a lot of rules that over the years the Republicans and Democrats have disagreed upon. They will push their agenda against labor, an agenda that will adversely effect labor. I do see us spending a lot of time in the rules committee."

He said Iowans who are concerned about the Republican majorities should continue to make their voices heard through elected officials.

"People need to realize that they have to be involved too. When they see bad legislation coming, I'll be there trying to protect them, but at some point they need to get involved, write letters, make phone calls and be involved. It's pretty tough when you're in the minority to get things done, but if you've got a lot of people behind you speaking up it does help."

"I can't change my agenda just because we changed control of power. I think the issues I have had for the past four years are still important."

-Rich Taylor
Iowa State Senator

Meeting time change needs more discussion

COUNCIL - Continued from Page 1

Chad Cangas asked for additional discussion on the subject. Mayor Brad Randolph also reminded the council that any time change would have to be approved by ordinance.

"This is asking if you'd like to consider it," said City Manager David Varley. "We're setting the dates for the council meetings for the year because some of them...they way they fall on certain holidays we want to make sure everyone knows when we meet. But Melinda (Blind, City Clerk) and I were talking about it and some people suggested start meetings earlier."



VARLEY

There are pros and cons to it. Some people say they could come right after work and then get home and be there in time for dinner and spend time with the kids."

Other issues concerning the change were summer and winter seasons and the shorter days, and if it's easier on the public or if it creates more problems with public attendance.

"It may work well for staff and for us, but we have to make sure it

"We're just throwing it out there...to see if it makes sense for people."

-David Varley, FM
City Administrator

makes sense for the public, too," Randolph said.

"We're just throwing it out there to change it to 5 or 6 and see if that makes sense for people," Varley said.

A vote on whether or not to change the time of the meeting will be placed on the agenda for the next meeting, Jan. 17.,

In other action, the council

- approved, 7-0, the hiring of one additional firefighter to replace a retiring firefighter.

- approved, 7-0, a form of Loan and Disbursement agreement between the city and the Iowa Finance Authority to obtain access to \$19,927,000 in sewer revenue capital loan notes

-approved, 7-0, the City Council meeting dates for 2017.

Lee County compensation board to meet tonight

PEN CITY CURRENT

MONTROSE - A meeting of the Lee County Compensation Board is scheduled for Wednesday, January 4, 2017 at 5:30 P.M., at the Lee County Correctional Center, 2530 255th Street, Montrose.

All elected officials are invited to make a presentation relating to any changes in duties during this past year.

The duty of the Compensation Board is to recommend Lee County elected official's salaries for fiscal year 2017/2018.

Contact Denise Fraise at 319-372-3705 for further information.



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For the Record

For the Record

Fort Madison Police Report

12/28/16 - 4:00 p.m. - Fort Madison police arrested Scott Allen Gilman, 49, of Fort Madison in the 800 block of Avenue E on a charge of third degree criminal mischief. He was released on a promise to appear.
 12/28/16 - 5:51 p.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a property damage accident in the 1700 block of Avenue H.
 12/29/16 - 7:45 a.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of burglary in the 1400 block of Avenue C.
 12/29/16 - 1:03 p.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of larceny / theft in the 4800 block of Avenue O.
 12/29/16 - 1:35 p.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of burglary in the 1100 block of Avenue D.
 12/29/16 - 2:42 p.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of burglary in the 600 block of Avenue E.
 12/29/16 - 1:25 p.m. - Fort Madison police arrested Matthew Warren Lopez, 20, of Fort Madison at ShopKo on a charge of fifth degree theft. He was released on consent to delay.
 12/29/16 - 3:53 p.m. - Fort Madison police arrested Alexis Elizabeth Dietsch, 20, of Fort Madison in the 300 block of Avenue E on an arrest warrant service (Burlington,

IA) on a failure to appear. She was taken to the Lee County Correctional Center.
 12/30/16 - 8:30 a.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of burglary in the 1600 block of Avenue D.
 12/30/16 - 10:23 a.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of larceny / theft in the 1500 block of Avenue G.
 12/30/16 - 11:37 a.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of burglary in the 3900 block of Bluff Road.
 12/30/16 - 12:21 p.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of vandalism in the 2700 block of Avenue O.
 12/31/16 - 7:25 a.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of larceny / theft in the 2600 block of Avenue L.
 12/31/16 - 10:00 a.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of burglary in the 500 block of Avenue E.
 12/31/16 - 11:09 a.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of larceny / theft in the 500 block of Avenue D.
 12/31/16 - 2:41 p.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a hit & run in the 2600 block of Avenue L.
 12/31/16 - 10:23 p.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a property damage accident at the intersection of 21st Street and Avenue A.
 1/1/17 - 8:09 a.m. - Fort Madison police responded to

a report of larceny / theft in the 5800 block of Avenue O.
 1/1/17 - 9:55 p.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of burglary in the 800 block of 29th Street.
 1/2/17 - 2:58 a.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of burglary in progress in the 1300 block of Avenue B.
 1/2/17 - 4:59 p.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of larceny / theft in the 500 block of Avenue D.
 1/2/17 - 6:53 p.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of burglary in the 400 block of 3rd Street.
 1/3/17 - 2:13 a.m. - Fort Madison police arrested Stanley Joe Davis, 26, of Montrose, in the 1200 block of 36th Street on a charge of driving while suspended. He was cited and released.
 1/3/17 - 2:22 a.m. - Fort Madison police arrested Alan Jake Little, 23, no address given, in the 1200 block of 36th Street on a warrant service Violation of No Contact Order and 5th degree criminal mischief. He was taken to the Lee County Correctional Center.

Lee County Sheriff's Report

12/23/16 - 1:51 a.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies responded to a one-vehicle accident on Belfast Road. A vehicle driven by Billy Dean Perkins,

25, of Bonaparte exited the roadway and struck a tree. Two passengers in the vehicle were taken to Fort Madison Community Hospital with injuries. Perkins was charged with OWI-1st offense and injury by vehicle.
 12/28/2016 - 1:18 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Joseph Dillan McCarty, 18, of Keokuk, at the Lee County Sheriff's office on a charge of probation/pretrial violation. He was jailed at the Lee County Correctional Center and then released on bond. Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested two juveniles sometime between midnight Dec. 29 and 11:59 p.m. Dec 30 on charges of fourth degree theft. According to state statute, information on the individuals and the crime are not public record.
 12/28/2016 - 5:16 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies responded to a two-vehicle accident near the intersection of 255th Street and 239th Ave. A vehicle driven by Julia Ann Smith, 17, of Donnellson, was struck from behind by a vehicle driven by Chase Logan Stutes, 16, of Keokuk. Stutes was cited for following to close. According to reports, Smith and two passengers in her vehicle and Stutes all complained of pain but no one was transferred for medical attention.
 12/30/2016 - 9:03 a.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies

arrested Ehren David Schneider, 36 of Brighton, at the Lee County Jail on a charge of violation of temporary restraining order. He was jailed.
 12/30/2016 - 10:16 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies responded to a one-vehicle accident on 255th Street near Montrose. A vehicle driven by Morgan Bailey Brooks, 17, of Donnellson, exited the roadway entering a ditch and ramping a driveway before going airborne and striking a power pole. The vehicle rolled and powerlines ignited grass on fire. No citations were issued at the scene. Brooks was transported to Fort Madison Community Hospital.
 12/31/2016 - 11:48 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Michael Louis McClain, 28, of Keokuk, in the 2900 block of 179th Avenue in Argyle, on a charge of being a sex offender. He was taken to the Lee County Correctional Center and jailed.
 12/31/2016 - 5:47 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Terron Nikael Wilson, 21, no address given, in Jackson Township Keokuk on a charge of assault. He was taken to the Lee County Correctional Center and jailed.
 12/31/2016 - 10 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Cecily Jean Bradley, 28 of Keokuk, at the intersection of Argyle Road and Iowa Road

in Keokuk, on charges of OWI 1st offense and possession of drug paraphernalia. She was taken to the Lee County Correctional Center and jailed. She was released on Jan. 1 on a promise to appear. It should be noted a criminal charge is merely an accusation and those charged in the above listings are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

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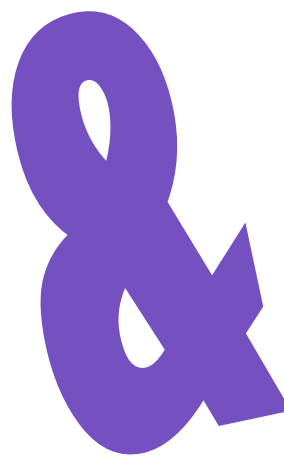
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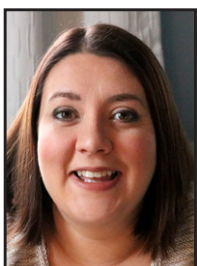


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Sports

Lady Crusaders blow out New London

Freshman Haas dumps season high 23 on Tigers

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - The Holy Trinity Lady Crusaders got a belated Christmas gift Tuesday in the freshman package of Ashlyn Haas.

Haas threw in a season high 23 points to lead Holy Trinity past visiting New London 62-40 at Shottenkirk Gymnasium.

Much like the HTC varsity boys did later in the evening, the girls squad came out of the lockerroom sluggish and couldn't find any points until almost five minutes had past in the first period, but has been the case with the Lady Crusaders all year, if they give you one bad quarter, plan on a good one as well.

HTC raced by the Lady Tigers in the second period outscoring New London 23-11 going into halftime.

Head Coach Tony Johnson said he likes what he's seeing in scoring output from the girls especially after the holiday break.

"We put 60 up in our last game in Wapello, so we're getting better," he said.

Haas set the tone for HTC in the first half with three

3-pointers enroute to 15 first half points. Johnson said he's been on the freshman to pull the trigger more often.

"We've been begging her to shoot from day one," Johnson said. "And over Christmas we worked on her a little more and she finally grabbed the bull by the horns. She can shoot... if she'll just shoot."

He said New London was aware of sophomore Taylor Boeding 3-point prowess and set up a defense to keep her under control.

They were playing a box-and-one on Taylor, so she wasn't going to score tonight. Taylor's one of our leading scorers and she wasn't going to score so someone had to step up and Ashlyn did," Johnson said.

Junior Brett Schneider, who was held scoreless in the first half, teamed up with Haas in the second half with 8 points each as the Lady Crusaders pushed



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Box'ed in

HTC's Emily Box goes back up with a shot Tuesday night in the Lady Crusaders' 62-40 win over New London at Shottenkirk Gymnasium. Freshman Ashlyn Haas led HTC with 23 points.

their lead to as many as 24 before the game ended.

Rounding out the scoring for HTC was Ali Randolph with 14, Mya Lawlor added 6, Boeding had 5, Emily Box chipped in with 4, and Maggie Walker added a bucket.

HTC is 4-5 on the season coming out of the break and travels to Notre Dame for a girls/boys jv/varsity matchup on Friday.

Holy Trinity's slow start to blame in Tuesday loss

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - The one-two punch of Holy Trinity Catholic's guard court wasn't enough to overcome New London's inside-out game Tuesday night as the Crusaders fell 62-50 at Shottenkirk Gymnasium.

Senior Corey Hopper led HTC with 22 points, followed by fellow senior Connor Conrad's 11 points. No other HTC player scored in double

figures.

The Crusaders couldn't find a bucket in the first quarter until senior Connor Hellweg converted a free-throw with just over two minutes left to play in the quarter. Senior Jack Stinson scored on the back end of two free-throws on the next possession to give HTC their first two points of the game. Already down 2-8, the Crusaders went scoreless the rest of the quarter while New London piled on eight more before the end of the half,

three courtesy of a 3-ball from sophomore Isaac McSorley from the right side.

In the second quarter, the Crusaders were able to get a little momentum going when the Tiger's senior Ben Dentlinger got his second foul early in the period. Dentlinger had been disrupting shots inside for most of the first 12 minutes. But the Tigers still outscored HTC 18-12 in the second period.

"We've got to find a way to come out of the gate better," said Head Coach

John Hellige after the game.

The Crusaders could get no closer than the 12-point final score spread but managed to outscore New London 34-28 in the second half.

"We played a super high effort in the second half," Hellige said. "That's a really good New London team."

Rounding out the scoring for the Crusaders was Bailey Merschman with 4 points, and Nick Pothitakis, Connor Hellweg and Stinson with three each.

Holy Trinity falls to 4-5 on the season and travels to Burlington Notre Dame on Friday for a girls/boys doubleheader.

The junior varsity team won the first game of the night 54-50 behind Reed Fehseke's 20 points. Matt Hellige was close behind with 17 followed by Blake Holtkamp with 8, Adam Rauenbuehler with 4, Blake Crabtree and Quentin Schneider each with two and Kyle Bredemeyer with 1.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

On the move

HTC senior Connor Conrad drives around New London's Keontae Luckett Tuesday night at Shottenkirk Gymnasium. The Crusaders fell to the visitors 62-50. Below senior Cory Hopper penetrates in the second half.



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Sports

Hounds move to 6-2 with win

Hounds were ranked No. 1 in scoring defense in 3A

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - The Fort Madison Bloodhounds gave up more points to Washington Tuesday night than they have to any other team all year. Fortunately the Hounds returned the favor by putting up more points than they have all year and sent the Demons home with the loss 72-59.

Head Coach Ryan Wilson said the Bloodhounds, coming out of the Christmas break, were ranked No. 1 in Class 3A in scoring defense allowing only 42 points per game.

"We gave up 59 so I was a little selfish in the locker-room after the game," Wilson said. "But we put up 70 so 'll take it."

The Hounds jumped all over Washington out of the gate and had the game well in hand despite several times where the Demons closed the gap to 7.

Jumping out to a 20-5 first quarter lead, the Hounds then traded buckets with Washington for the first part of the second quarter before stalling out at 29 for about four minutes. During that time the Demons were able to close the gap to 11 at the four-minute mark. The Hounds managed to convert one 3-point basket in the last three minutes taking a 36-26 lead into the locker-room.

The teams took turns with baby runs throughout the third period highlighted by back-to-back three pointers by Kaleb Cresswell and C.J. Richardson at the 4-minute mark but the teams began trading buckets again and the Hounds rolled through the third period with a

12-point lead.

The fourth quarter saw some inside production from the Hounds. Cresswell had a nifty crossover and pulled up at the top of the key on the right side for a jumper and then junior Elijah Barnes took over the inside for the Hounds.

"Caleb shot the ball really well. I've been working with him on the upper part of the lane," Wilson said. "He's got to be able to get there and hit that pull up because he'll over dribble and get caught in the middle where defenses can knock that shot around."

Barnes finished with a season-high 14 points, including 10 in the second half to help fill the gap when senior Austin Rose fouled out.

"He stepped up and he's capable of that," Wilson said. He played like that last year in the first round district game. We have those talks and I tell him he's capable of it... and we need to see it. He played hard, finished at the rim and knocked down a couple of free throws."

Wilson said Rose plays with such intensity that it's tough to coach him out of that.

"We gave up 59 so I was a little selfish coming out of the lockerroom after the game."

-Ryan Wilson
FMHS Head Coach

"You can't get mad at him because he plays so hard. You can't coach that. You either have it or you don't."

Cresswell finished with 26 points to lead the Hounds followed by CJ Richardson with 15 and Barnes' 11. Logan Rashid had 9 points for the Hounds followed by Treavor Kokjohn with 6 and Rose with two.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Not quite

FMHS junior Elijah Barnes gets a hand on the ball while guarding the lane against Washington on Tuesday night. The Hounds won 72-59.

Third quarter bites Lady Hounds again

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - If the Fort Madison Lady Hounds could just skip the third quarter, they may have a few more "W"s in the bag.

The Lady Hounds had to scrape and crawl to get back into the game in the fourth quarter where they were able to close the gap to three before falling to Washington 46-43 in the first game off the holiday break Tuesday night.

Head Coach Charles Knipe's squad has seen a scenario unfold several times this year where Fort Madison had a lead or a tie going into halftime only to have his troops fizzle in the third quarter and put the game out of reach.

The Lady Hounds were paced in the first half by

senior Mercedes Trimble and junior Amber Dilsaver. Trimble had 10 first half points including two 3-pointers, which have been scarce this year for Fort Madison. Dilsaver had three inside buckets and a free throw for seven points in the first half. The Hounds were tied with the Lady Demons at 22 going into the break.

"I don't know why can't come out and be strong," Knipe said. "We went in halftime after hitting a three pointer and came out jacked up," Knipe said "They didn't change their defense or anything, we just threw the ball away five times and we couldn't deal with their press."

Washington put a press on the Hounds and forced turnover after turnover to start the period and outscored Fort Madison 20-6 in the 3rd period. The Lady Hounds had

dug themselves a 39-25 hole going into the final period. But as has been the history with with Hounds, they tried to claw their way back into the game in the fourth using some stingy defense and three more 3-point field goals to make a run at Washington.

"We took care of the press and they pulled it off, and then we just took care of the ball," Knipe said. "We started being patient on offense... got a couple shots to fall and convinced the girls that it was just one possession at a time."

Knipe said overall he was pleased with the team's effort and was happy to see some 3-pointers, but said the Lady Hounds still need to find some offense to balance out the inside play and rebounding success his team usually has.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Rough game

FMHS senior Mercedes Trimble gets beat up as she goes into the lane for a shot Tuesday night at the Hound Dome. Trimble finished with 13 including three 3-pointers for the Lady Hounds who lost 46-43.

"We gave up a lot of offensive rebounds. We out-rebound everyone, but we just couldn't get it done tonight. And many times Amber was wide open and we just couldn't get her the ball."

Washington came into the game 1-6 but Knipe said that record is a bit deceptive because the

Lady Demons have played tough non-conference opponents such as Marion and Sigourney.

"They're a lot better than that record indicates," he said.

Dilsaver finished the game with a team high 16, followed by Trimble with 13, including three 3-pointers. Senior Mariah

Trimble chipped in with 4 points, Anna Kester and Taylor Shannon each had three points and seniors Emily Mitchell and Brittney Harris each added two. Washington was led by Sarah Nacos with 14.

The Lady Hounds are now 3-5 on the season and host Fairfield Friday at home.

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From the Front

Projects win for energy and rehab efforts

AWARDS - Continued from Page 1

meier.

Steffensmeier said her project has resulted in a net gain for the company in electrical usage, but they haven't fully realized the grid's potential as she's still supplementing energy from Alliant.

"With the winter shorter months we're having to run the generator a bit," Steffensmeier said.

"In the purchase agreement with Alliant, we have to stay under 20,000 kilowatts for 12 consecutive months. Once we fulfill that the generator can go away and so can our scheduling woes. For example sunlight starts at whatever time of day and we see this on graphs but we don't get full benefit until about 9:30ish in the morning. So right now we're scheduling to take advantage of that. What will eventually happen is the surplus energy will just go on the meter and when we are producing more than we are consuming it will be "banked" on the meter. Long story short, we're \$3,700 to the good on our electrical usage."

Schneider has been working on the School House apartments for just over three years after purchasing the former Fort Madison Junior High School in 2014. He handled the general contractor role and put together a construction team for most of the rehabilitation, but used some sub contractors for electrical and plumbing.

"We tried to be as green as we could," Schneider said. We use heat pumps which is like an air conditioner running backwards. It will pull the heat from the air

to help heat the homes... things like that that people don't get to see. We put things like that in place to help be more efficient."

But people certainly get to see the solar panels that adorn the top of the parking area. What isn't so visible is the majority of the approximate 900 panels that sit on the roof and over the western section of the building.

Schneider, and Steffensmeier as well, used Ideal Energy out of Fairfield for the installation of the solar equipment. The company, owned by former U.S. Navy SEAL Troy Van Beek is a solar energy construction and consulting agency.

"I firmly believe in the power of clean energy to transform our world. In 2006, I returned home to the Midwest after spending 12+ years serving in the US Navy SEAL teams and working elite security details in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. I was intimately aware of the issues surrounding carbon-based energy



Photo courtesy of Steffensmeier Welding & Mfg.

A solar "flare"

Steffensmeier Welding & Mfg. in Pilot Grove has been awarded a 2017 1000 Friends of Iowa development award for their use of Renewable Energy. Pictured here are the 24 rows of solar panels installed in 2016 to provide enough energy to run the facility on solar power.

sources, and wanted to pursue energy alternatives that could increase global security and create a healthier planet," Van Beek says on the company's website.

Schneider's solar project cost about \$1.1 million of the entire project's \$5.5 million price tag.

Schneider said he had just heard about the project receiving the award before he left for vacation prior to Christmas. But he says the real joy from the project comes from the residents who now have a new home.

"Several times I've had renters who tell me they love living here," Schneider said. "I had one guy tell me, 'I love going home and I tell my friends that and they think I'm crazy'. You walk through the hallways and rarely do we see anybody. The people that live here don't see it as an apartment because it's so quiet, but more as a home and that's huge for me."

The project was also recognized as they Roof-Mount Solar Project of the Year by Solar Builder magazine, a national publication focused on solar power and its utilization across the country.

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